



THE ROLE OF BENIGN ENVY ON CONSUMPTION

A Cross-Cultural Comparison in Social Networking Environment

Nguyen Tran Truc Quan

International Business

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Paurav Shukla

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ABSTRACT OF
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Objectives

This thesis aims to investigate benign envy and purchase intentions of social media users in different cultures. To achieve this, Finnish and Vietnamese of all ages, who engaged in social media usage were sampled. As they represent the less and more collectivist sides of consumers, the difference in collectivism is employed to examine the variations in purchase intentions across cultures.

Summary

Despite being known for its negative impacts on personal and social well-being, envy possesses a subtype called benign envy, which constructively affects sales and economic development. Additionally, compared to malicious envy, benign envy is more common in social media settings. As the number of social media users increases substantially, this positive side of envy becomes a promising aspect for businesses to exploit. Previous studies connect benign envy with the motivation to obtain the same virtue or goods owned by the advantaged party. It is thus hypothesized that this pattern remains valid in online contexts. Moreover, because the intensity of benign envy and the need to conform with social norms are positively correlated to collectivism, collectivist nations are expected to have higher purchase intentions than individualists. 206 participants were engaged through a questionnaire to draw answers for these propositions. While the results support the first argument, they reject the second one since the impacts of envy and collectivism on purchase intentions are independent.

Conclusions

It could be concluded from this research that benign envy, regardless of offline or online settings, enhances the incentive to obtain the good of the comparable other. Nevertheless, collectivism does not have a significant role in this relationship. Social comparison, on the contrary, could increase envy-related consumption.

Key words: Marketing, Social media, Psychology

Language: English

Grade:

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

People tend to compare themselves with the surrounding others (Festinger, 1954). This cognitive trait, which results in envy, manipulates human behavior in several socio-economic aspects including workplace productivity and relationships with colleagues and team members (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Menon & Thompson, 2010). Conspicuous consumption is another classic consequence of envy (Wong, 1997; Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2010; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). During the year 2018, top 100 luxury goods companies reported cumulative sales of 217 billion US dollars globally (Deloitte, 2019). In this manner, envy constitutes a powerful economic force.

Even though managers have been familiar with the use of envy in marketing, most of them remain skeptical about the practicality of such approach. They believe envy could backfire and cause the enviers to disregard the goods being advertised (Kristofferson et al., 2018). However, by focusing on undesirable effects, businesses seem to recognize solely the destructive side of envy. Van de Ven et al. (2011a) propose that benign envy, the constructive envy form, could encourage purchases of goods owned by the envied. Due to the increasingly competitive environments in which firms continuously adjust and innovate their marketing strategies, utilizing benign envy to increase sales becomes one of the most critical practices.

The advantages of envy could be intensified by changes in lifestyles and technological developments. Belk (2011) finds that social networking sites (SNS) creates anonymity in the comparison process and allows users to assess themselves with the unacquainted from various countries and cultures. As the familiarity people have with social media grows, this finding suggests a more widespread effect of envy and supports social media as an ideal platform for marketing products and services. Nonetheless, there remains a possibility that people would get used to self-promotion on SNS and neglect the impact of such practice on their purchase intentions.

Difficulties for managers in utilizing envy also exist as different cultures might employ dissimilar approaches in coping with envy. Hofstede (2011) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”; thus, culture is reasonably embedded in human psychology and daily activities such as consumption. However, how culture influences envy remains a debatable topic. Wu (2015) reports a positive relationship between collectivism and social comparison, which is a precondition of envy. In contrast, Moritz and Smith (2013) note the significant role of envy on consumption of American, who are known as typical individualists.

Given these backgrounds, this thesis attempts to explore the connection between envy and purchase intentions in social networking settings. Ambiguities concerning the effect of cultural factors on envy consumption shall also be resolved. After the data have been analyzed, suggestions are made regarding the use of envy as a marketing tool in online platforms. Possible cautions when applying envy in various cultures are also covered.

1.2. Research problem

Envy is conceivably an important but neglected side of consumer research. Despite the recognition of envy-related concepts like veblen, snob and bandwagon (Veblen, 1899), consumer research typically analyze the person-thing or person-person relationships rather than the person-thing-person one as that of envy (Belk, 2011). Recent academic landscape has marked gradual changes. Van de Ven et al. (2011a) found that benign envy could encourage purchase intentions. However, since this study was carried out eight years ago, re-examination for possible changes is necessary.

Despite the prevalence of social media in the modern society, research on envy related to this topic is inadequately developed. To the extent that they exist, such studies often examine how envy affect personal well-being and social media usage instead of consumer decisions (Krasnova et al., 2015; Tandoc et al., 2015; Wu, 2015). To bridge this gap, the thesis discovers how envy affects purchase intention in social networking environment. Differences in cultural values might also cause consumers from various

countries to react differently to envy, but few studies have investigated this issue. Addressing such dissimilarities would provide an inclusive knowledge of envy, which could be applied to companies over the globe and multinational corporations. Individualism-collectivism, one of the most frequently mentioned dimensions of Hofstede (2011), is employed in this study to meet such demand.

1.3. Research questions

Broadly, this thesis investigates the influence of benign envy on consumers across cultures. The scope is then narrowed to social media and how users respond to posts about luxurious experiences. The following research questions are useful in ascertaining the direction of the paper:

- To what extent does benign envy lead to the intention to purchase the same good as the envied person in the social networking environment?
- To what extent does this effect of benign envy differ in collectivist and individualist cultures?

1.4. Research objectives

To elaborate on the research questions, objectives of this thesis are specified as follow:

- Explore the probability that being benignly envious of a perceived comparable other on SNS would encourage consumers to attain the fortune possessed by this individual.
- Discover whether people in collectivist cultures are more likely than those from individualist ones to purchase a good or service because of envy. The proposition is investigated by employing Vietnamese and Finnish as representatives of collectivists and individualists respectively.

1.5. Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into six distinctive sections. First, a brief background of the research is provided, which is followed by an exhaustive description on the research problem, objectives and questions. Second, a literature review discusses the crucial constructs, present knowledge and gaps of the topic. A conceptual framework is also designed in this section to guide the direction of the thesis. Third, the methodology part clarifies data collecting and questionnaire designing procedure. Fourth, during the finding section, hypotheses are examined, and research questions are answered. Fifth, the conclusion summarizes the key results. Finally, the practicality of the thesis is analysed through its limitations and implications on international business.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most works on to envy covers its definition, envy subtypes, appraisal and antecedents, and this literature review not an exception. The review provides a quick look on envy as a negative notion, how it originates from the social comparison process and followed by an attempt to differentiate envy from similar terms. Moreover, because the thesis aims to provide suggestions for marketers, how benign envy impact consumer behaviors is worth covering. To answer the research questions, details on how functions of social media and cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2011) amplify benign envy will also be addressed. After all salient points have been discussed, a conceptual framework is provided to summarize the relevant constructs and guide the direction of the thesis.

2.1. Envy and its negative nature

Whenever envy is discussed, people tend to mention its destructive consequences. Children are taught about envy through fairy tales unconsciously, typical examples of which include Cain and Abel, Snow White, and Cinderella. In Cinderella, the main character is envied by her step-sisters for her beauty and kindness. Consequently, they try to cause her misery. (Grimm, 1997 cited Belk, 2011). The protection motivation and self-efficacy theories offer explanations to such maliciousness by specifying that being

weaker than comparable others develops the tendency to behave cautiously or defensively against threats (Maddux & Rogers, 1982). More serious examples could be found in reality like when Indonesian causing the death of more successful Chinese store owners in Jakarta in 1998 (Belk, 2008). The destructive impact of envy is also acknowledged in prominent religions such as the seven deadly sins of the Bible (Epstein, 2003). As the presentation of envy remains consistent among various fairy tales, religions and real cases, its undesirable nature is recognized across borders of nationalities.

Enviars also suffer from harmful consequences of envy. Studies frequently discuss how envy distract enviars from making rational decisions (Crusius & Mussweiler, 2012; Le, 2015). For instance, a woman might find herself unintendedly purchase the same costume as her colleague or a child might insist on buying a toy that his or her classmates boast of having. This purports that envy is related to materialism, which causes greed and miserliness (Belk, 1985; Zheng et al., 2018). Moreover, envy could lead to depression and reduction in self-esteem of enviars (Vogel et al., 2014; Krasnova et al., 2015; Tandoc et al., 2015). Ultimately, envy is often portrayed as a painful emotion to the individual experiencing it.

2.2. Envy and social comparison process

According to Festinger (1954: 118), social comparison occurs when "objective, non-social means are not available, [thus], people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with opinions and abilities of others". Additionally, between upward and downward social evaluation, only the upward form could constitute envy (Festinger, 1954). It is understandable that individuals are appealed to higher achievements since human nature encourages self-improvement, which Wood (1989) explains through the maintenance of self-esteem. The negative emotion when confronting with better others is also supported by the study of Bosch et al. (2010), in which the confidence of women decreases in front of more attractive females but increases with less attractive ones. As a result, upward social comparison should be the focus of research on envy and its consequences.

2.3. Definition of envy

Parrott and Smith (1993: 906) defined envy as an emotion that “occurs when a person lacks another’s superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desire it or wishes that the other lacked it”. Smith and Kim (2007: 49) described envy as “an unpleasant and often painful blend of feelings characterized by inferiority, hostility, and resentment caused by comparison with a person or group of persons who possess something we desire”. Though both seem sensible, these definitions contain limitations.

Diving into more details, the delineation of Parrott and Smith (1993) does not mention pain, which is a core component that discriminates envy from admiration. That of Smith and Kim (2007) seems satisfactory, but as this thesis investigates the effect of benign envy on purchase intentions, the partition of envy subtypes is necessary (details on pain and subtypes of envy shall be discussed in the following sub-sections). Having satisfied all criteria, envy in this study should be such emotion that “involves burdensome pain about being inferior to another person. It occurs as either benign envy, entailing longing to improve oneself and emulate the envied person, or malicious envy, entailing hostile thoughts and intentions directed at harming the other”. (Lange et al., 2018: 592).

2.4. Theories relating to envy

Pain-driven Dual Envy Theory (PaDE) is first introduced by Lange et al. (2018) with two components, namely Pain and Dual Envy Theory. Pain Theory of Envy describes envy as a source of pain and inferiority experienced during social comparison whereas Dual Envy Theory divides envy into benign and malicious envy. In fact, these envy forms have been mentioned several times by scholars, either with identical or distinctive names (e.g: proper and non-proper envy in Smith & Kim, 2007; black and white envy in Milovic, 2014). However, weaknesses exist in each theory. In specific, pain is the cause behind constructive and destructive behaviors that should not be ignored when separating envy into subtypes as in Dual Envy Theory. Contrarily, by focusing solely on the pain of envy, Pain Theory of Envy might not consider consequences of envy subtypes such as schadenfreude (Lange et al., 2018). Having integrated these relevant

constructs, Pain-driven Dual Envy Theory reduces confusions in operationalization and constitutes a more comprehensive theory of envy (see Figure 1).

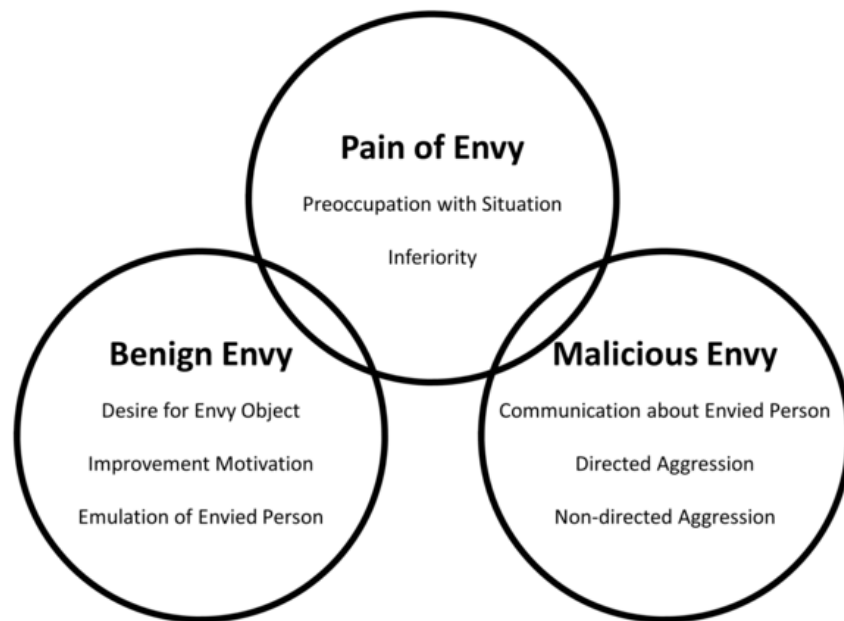


Figure 1: The Pain-driven Dual Envy (PaDE) Theory (Lange et al., 2018)

Studies continue to argue whether benign and malicious envy are opposite emotions or subtypes of general envy. Because benign and malicious envy are both painful, considering them as contradicting concepts is inappropriate. Though both support the second viewpoint, Cohen-Charash and Larson (2017), as opposed to Lange et al. (2018), suggested studying envy as a general concept for broader understanding of envy consequences. The practicality of this approach is, nonetheless, questionable shall the subsets result in contradicting reactions. Difficulties in operationalization would also arise. Consequently, benign and malicious envy should be considered as envy subtypes and be studied separately. The paragraphs below will discuss in detail envy subtypes, their similarities, differences and relative relevance.

2.4.1. Malicious envy

Malicious envy is frequently mentioned by scholars and is why people are taught to avoid envy. This subtype occurs when the advantage of the envied target is regarded as undeserved. Hence, it is characterized by hostility and the intention to lower

achievements of the envied person (van de Ven et al., 2009; 2011a; Crusius & Lange, 2014; Lange & Crusius, 2015). In an experiment by Zizzo and Oswald (2001), most participants show the incentive to destroy incomes of wealthier individuals despite having to sacrifice their earnings. In this manner, malicious envy also deviates envious from striving for their best. If experienced in a sizable population, this could lead to diminishing personal and societal well-being.

Such negative consequence of malicious envy is known as *schadenfreude*, the happiness against misfortune of others (Smith et al., 1996). This does not occur in benign envy, which van de Ven et al. (2015) find valid even in countries without words for envy subtypes. To the extent that the connection between malicious envy and *schadenfreude* is true, it will invent a novel way to distinguish envy subtypes.

Controversy exists when *schadenfreude* was portrayed as a production of subjective feelings such as dislike or anger (Hareli & Weiner, 2002). Feather and Sherman (2002) also claimed that resentment and not envy causes *schadenfreude*. In fact, these studies faced weaknesses by ignoring dissimilarities in gender between respondents and the envied target. When correcting this drawback, van Dijk et al. (2006) report a relevant connection between envy and *schadenfreude*. As Lange et al. (2018) later find resentment as a part of malicious envy, resentment, *schadenfreude* and malicious envy seem to be interconnected. In addition, research tend to exclude *schadenfreude* from envy by investigating the desire of respondents for coveted objects. This, however, is a feature of benign, not malicious envy.

Regarding consumer behavior, recent knowledge notes the potential of malicious envy in increasing purchase intention, which makes it less destructive. People often deal with malicious envy through social differentiation, in which they prefer to compete in a domain where there are advantages over the envied (Lemaine, 1974). For illustration, in an experiment of van de Ven et al. (2011a), between an iPhone of the advantaged party and a Blackberry with similar functions, malicious envious tend to buy and pay more for the Blackberry. This finding conveys a significant contribution to studies attempting to

differentiate benign from malicious envy and for marketers wishing to exploit envy appropriately.

2.4.2. Benign envy

Benign envy is the constructive subtype of envy that has become the renewed focus of scholars. Despite being both negative and painful, several differences are available between benign and malicious envy. For instance, achievements of the benignly envied are assessed as deserved (van de Ven et al., 2009). Hence, hostility is absent in this subset (Lange et al., 2018). Such differences in nature also lead to dissimilar consequences. Particularly, while malicious enviers focus on harming the advantaged party, benign enviers value self-enhancement (Smith & Kim, 2007; van de Ven et al., 2009; Lange & Crusius, 2014; Zheng et al., 2018;). This is reflected in how benign envy impacts consumer behaviors. However, before elaborating on this, discussing the typical effects of envy on consumption is essential.

Whenever the subject of envy evokes in marketing, conspicuous consumption is normally discussed. It appears that benign envy also embraces this attribute. Belk (2011) and McLeod (2016) specify that enviers acquire luxury goods to maintain their identity or social statuses. According to Ashmun (2012), collectivists with interdependent selves frequently consume to gain entrance into their reference groups whereas individualists with independent selves purchase goods to elevate social statuses. Whatever the case is, the advantages of conspicuous consumption to businesses is undeniable.

Another relevant consequence of envy is impulsive buying, which is defined by Crusius and Mussweiler (2012) as a purchase without established intentions. Examples of this are found in both offline and online contexts. To illustrate, Marcia Reynolds, an interviewee of Anderson and Taylor (2014), found herself constantly moving to more spacious houses to keep up with people on social media. Companies in the fashion industry also encourage impulsive buying through the display of goods behind store windows (Le, 2015),

From the standpoint of envy subtypes, the impact of benign envy on consumption is more straightforward. Van de Ven et al. (2011a) conclude that benign envy encourages the purchase of the same good owned by the envied. Subsequent literature has replicated this study and come up with similar results (Milovic, 2014; Le, 2015; Taylor & Strutton, 2016). To the extent that this is accurate, the coveted good is presumably known in benign envy. On the contrary, it would be challenging or much impossible for companies to predict correctly a similar but not the same good as possessed by the advantaged party in the case of malicious envy. Therefore, benign envy is a better concept in developing marketing strategies. With the advancement of social media, which will be addressed later in section 2.7, such influence of benign envy on consumer behaviors is consolidated. The first hypothesis is thus determined as follow:

H1: Online benign enviers would intend to purchase the same product or service posted by an advantaged party.

2.5. Issues in defining envy

People frequently mistake envy for “admiration”, “jealousy” and “resentment”. Since this causes difficulties in defining and applying envy, a thorough analysis is crucial to differentiate envy and these concepts.

2.5.1. Envy and Admiration

According to van de Ven et al. (2009; 2012), envy is a result of social comparison while admiration is not. This could explain how people frequently admire those of higher status (Cohen-Charash, 2009) while socially comparing themselves with similar others (Festinger, 1954). Smith and Kim (2007) address this through the concept of relevant ingroup competition. Precisely, an individual would admire instead of envy, someone that does not compete with members of his or her social group. For instance, a student majoring in business might envy a classmate who scores higher on the midterm test but would admire a student majoring in music for winning a prestigious musical award.

In terms of envy subtypes, admiration and benign envy are comparable (van de Ven et al., 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). Unlike admiration, which remains to be pleasant by nature, benign envy is painful (van de Ven et al., 2010). Nonetheless, both emotions do not lead to malicious action towards the envied. Back to the differences, van de Ven et al. (2009; 2011a; 2011b; 2012) claimed that as opposed to benign envy, admiration does not encourage individuals to level-up themselves. However, controversy exists regarding this argument. For instance, in the study of Immordino-Yang and Sylvan (2010), people admiring the virtue of another party aspire to become virtuous. Revisiting this topic in 2017, van de Ven also finds that admiration result in self-enhancement but with a delayed impact. Therefore, benign envy and admiration both seem to motivate self-improvements, but through different processes.

2.5.2. Envy and Jealousy

Linguistic errors constitute the fundamental reasons behind the misperception between envy and jealousy. Confusions arise from having some countries employ equivalent words for envy and jealousy or use them interchangeably (Salovey & Rodin, 1986). In fact, people often display different concerns when experiencing envy and jealousy. As Parrott and Smith (1993) specify, feeling inadequate leads one to focus on the supremacy rather than the identity of others as in the case of jealousy. Nonetheless, this argument is irrational since personal identity could provide a basis for perceived deservingness, which distinguishes between benign and malicious envy. Therefore, stating that enviers place a more significant emphasis on possessions of advantaged parties is more appropriate.

The primary manner to distinguish envy from jealousy is through the role people take in these cognitive processes. It appears that envious individuals are aware of their inferiority (Anderson & Taylor, 2014; Smith & Kim, 2007; Lange et al., 2018) whereas those experiencing jealousy think they have more than others and are fearful of losing their ownership (Purshouse, 1975). This explains why scholars frequently connect

jealousy with the anxiety of losing the significant other to a third party (Parrott & Smith; 1993; DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). Being connected to personal relationships, jealousy involves three people compared to two and a good or virtue as in envy. Moreover, envy is more shameful than jealousy since people find it easier to sympathize romance related issues (Belk, 2011). The shame of envy is studied by Krasnova et al. (2015), who observed people deny subjective envy while admitting the objective side of it.

2.5.3. Envy and Resentment

Unlike admiration, resentment is often compared with malicious envy. In fact, resentment is a component of malicious envy according to Malicious Envy Theory (Lange et al., 2018). Nonetheless, it is inappropriate to assume sameness between the two concepts. Resentment is not a consequence of social comparison (ibid). This is sensible as resentment could occur without differences in social statuses such as when facing with mistreatments and unfair privileges (Smith, 1991: Smith et al., 1994). This means that the resentful party enjoys certain legitimacy whereas malicious enviers are unjustified to criticize others for owning more than them. Even when such advantage is undeserved, the envier might not become deserved of it.

2.6. Appraisal and antecedents of benign envy

Scholars have mentioned antecedents of envy earlier than one might have thought. To illustrate, Aristotle (384-324 BC) and David Hume (1711-1776) highlighted the importance of proximity and inferiority (Celse, 2010) in generating envy. Antecedents of benign and malicious envy are broadly the same, but as an appraisal, deservingness is used to differentiate between envy subsets.

2.6.1. Deservingness of the envied as an appraisal of benign envy

Initial studies frequently underline the vitality of non-deservingness to envy. For instance, Smith and Kim (2007) mention the principal role of injustice in defining envy, and the difference between social injustice and unfairness is the key to distinguish envy

from resentment. Recent articles (van de Ven et al., 2009; 2011a; 2012; Zheng et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Lange et al., 2018), on the other hand, employ this concept to divide envy into its subtypes. In specific, deservingness results in benign envy and the consumption of the good owned by the envied while non-deservingness leads to malicious envy and the consumption of a similar product (van de Ven et al., 2011a). Roos (2014), however, found that undeserved advantages raised envy in general and the desire to gain the achievements of the envied. Unlike van de Ven et al. (2011a), Roos (2014) replaced experiments by surveys when collecting data. This approach often faced exaggeration and inaccurate introspection from respondents (Bergman et al., 2011; Cohen-Charash & Larson, 2017), which makes his conclusion less reliable.

As humans are hardly completely rational, deservingness is a subjective concept. Lin and Utz (2015) discovered that SNS users tended to regard those who are close with them as more deserved of their achievements. In another example, personal judgements of the personality of the envied (arrogant versus confident) decide whether benign or malicious envy is elicited (van de Ven, 2016). Hence, it is easier for individuals with good dignity to trigger benign envy from others.

2.6.2. Inferiority of the envier as an antecedent of envy

Since upward social comparison produces envious feelings (Festinger, 1954), perceived inferiority is indeed a basic element of envy. In fact, without being inferior, one would not feel offensive regarding the achievements of others on social media. Inferiority is also related to face-saving and maintenance of social status, which are the reasons behind envy-related consumption (Wong et al., 1998; Monkhouse et al., 2012). However, since inferiority only predicts depression, not hostility (Smith et al., 1994) it might be a necessary but insufficient condition to generate envy. This argument is precise to some extent since being inferior to a socially distant person like a billionaire would hardly result in envy.

2.6.3. Perceived control of the envier as an antecedent of envy

Perceived control is the extent to which the advantages of the envied are obtainable (Smith & Kim, 2007). Therefore, to maintain a high perceived control, the inferior-superior gap should not be extreme. It is sensible that people envy things they could achieve by working hard. Otherwise, the result is likely admiration, not benign envy (Belk, 2011). An example of this would be how individuals admire the lives of celebrities but tend to be benignly envious of achievements of their neighbors. This makes perceived control somehow positively correlates to similarity and is a supplement to inferiority. Interestingly, the opposite seems to occur between perceived control and deservingness. As noted by van de Ven et al. (2012), undeserved advantages equal low ability to affect and modify the situation. In this sense, high perceived control could be another factor discriminating benign from malicious envy.

2.6.4. Similarity between the envied and envier as an antecedent of envy

The similarity between the envied and envier has received interest from scholars since the old days. Aristotle mentioned it through the phrase “Potter against Potter” (Celse, 2010; Smith & Kim, 2007). Nowadays, studies like that of van de Ven et al. (2009; 2011a), Milovic, (2014) and Liu et al. (2018) use similarity to control the generation of envy. This remains genuine in an online setting since Chou (2017) finds that bloggers who create connection with their followers through personal information sharing are more likely to become envied targets.

While perceived control is based on social statuses of comparable parties, similarity is more about socio-demographic aspects such as age, gender and occupation. To illustrate, Chou (2017) finds that viewers of micro-blogs often compare themselves with bloggers of the same race. Furthermore, in the paper of Chan and Sengupta (2013), colleagues of the same gender and similar ages, who are in the same department and have similar job roles could provoke envy among each other. Nevertheless, difficulties in determining similar others might arise in social networking sites. Because of self-design

profiles, perceived similarity would depend largely on the information users decide to put online. Such information could be true, exaggerated or false from reality.

2.6.5. Self-importance to the envier as an antecedent of envy

It is expected that individuals are more likely to experience envy when the comparison domain is important to them. Various authors (Silver & Sabini, 1978; Salovey & Rodin, 1984; Tesser, 1988; Wood, 1989) agree that self-relevance is a condition for the emergence of any emotions in the social comparison process. Moreover, in the paper of Covington (2000), students modify their self-regulation based on desired academic results. This denotes that self-importance is vital in encouraging personal improvement, which is the goal of benign envy.

2.6.6. Characteristics of goods as antecedents of envy

Goods that are luxurious, unique, publicly noticeable and low in availability have higher likeliness in leading to envy (Young & Rubicam, 2009). However, these attributes might not need to be wholly satisfied to produce envy. For example, limited editions of products sold at Christmas could attract a higher customer share despite being inexpensive.

Back to the features of goods, it is understandable that those limited in number or amount are desirable because the impact of upward social comparison would not be valid if these goods are easily obtainable (Roos, 2014). This also applies to how luxury triggers envy. As commented by Belk (1985), money is limitedly available in the economy; hence, a product or service that costs a significant amount of money is probably difficult to purchase, which decreases its perceived availability.

Uniqueness is another characteristic of good that triggers envy. According to Snyder and Fromkin (1977), maintaining oneself as a distinctive individual is a self-protective response towards identity threat. Nevertheless, Young and Rubicam (2009), a consulting company, and Zheng et al. (2018) state that no matter how unique the goods are, they should be widely recognized by others to create envy. Rationalizing on this,

envy is comprehended as an approach to keep up with the Joneses or comparable others, which is only visible if the goods are publicly known. In addition, people could not trigger social media envy shall the posted products or services lack noticeability. Interestingly, Young and Rubicam (2009) propose that coveted objects should also maintain some level of mystery. The notion of mystery is similar to uniqueness because both trigger curiosity from consumers and increase their desire towards the items.

2.7. Social media as a new source of benign envy

Social media, as specified by Cambridge Dictionary (2019), covers “website and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone”. Since its birth, social media has played a pivotal role in human’s life. Particularly, until October 2018, Facebook has reached 2234 million active users, followed by Youtube, Instagram and Twitter with 1900, 1000 and 335 million respectively (Statista, 2019a). In China where foreign platforms are limited, QQ, Tik Tok and Sina Weibo dominate the market by accumulating over 1700 million active users (ibid). Moreover, as stated by Sun (2017), hours spent by people on social media are averagely four times more than that on personal relationships. Therefore, the tremendous impact of social media on human emotions and behaviors, including shopping activities, is undeniable.

Social media triggers user envy through its unprecedented functions. As Gorbach (2016) highlights, one of the features of SNS is to help individuals communicate casually regardless of social statuses. SNS users could also follow famous people such as singers, actors and business owners who used to be seen exclusively on TV (Anderson & Taylor, 2014; Samuel, 2018). These functions reduce user proximity, make people feel as if the superior lifestyle is affordable and self-exaggerate things they have not achieved (ibid). Facebook also provides a mutual-friend list called “people you may know” (Krasnova et al., 2015). Since similarity in interests and background is the basis through which Facebook develop this list, when users invite a person from it, he or she becomes a potential source of envy.

Though decreasing the gap between those with dissimilar identity, SNS could idealize the image of average users through self-designed profiles. According to Anderson and Taylor (2014) and Samuel (2018), filtering and selecting positive information to post on SNS is a common practice. This notion is known as narcissism, which is the need to promote oneself (Taylor & Strutton, 2016). When reaching an intense level, narcissism could foster an illusion of “what most others have” and cause one to be envious over an avatar that is far from reality or a self-creating image that one wishes to become (Belk, 2011; Sarner, 2018). Hence, the impact of SNS has upgraded from raising the number of potential candidates for envy to increasing the instances provoking envy.

The influence of social media on envy might depend on how it is used. As Krasnova et al. (2015) and Tandoc et al. (2015) specify, passively consuming information by solely surfing Facebook Newsfeed results in malicious envy. This impact could occur regardless of online platforms since Wu (2015) finds the same result by analyzing messages on Twitter. Scholars are concerned that this could lead to depression and a reduction in social media usage (Krasnova et al., 2015; Wu, 2015). Notwithstanding, the increasing prevalence of phrases like Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) (Anderson & Taylor, 2014; Samuel, 2018) indicates the difficulty in giving up on social media, hence maintain the role of SNS as an envy generator. Furthermore, it would be inadequate to affirm the negative influence of online malicious envy on SNS usage without considering the impact of benign envy. Ruoyun (2018) highlights that benign envy is more common in online settings. Benign envy, which results from active usage of SNS such as posting and commenting, could also raise the use of online platforms (Wu, 2015). Since one could hardly find users who do not comment on social media, it is rational to expect benign envy to arise among SNS users.

2.8. Benign envy in a cross-cultural environment

Although envy is a global concept (Smith & Kim, 2007; Wu, 2015; Hofstede, 2011), it is indubitable that different cultures might embrace dissimilar envy-coping strategies. This is because individuals incorporate cultures unconsciously into daily lives, usually in the

form of values (Hofstede, 2011). A study by Wu (2015) has also found a significant influence of cultures on benign envy.

To effectively investigate how culture influences envy, employing a suitable model is essential. In this case, Hofstede's cultural dimensions would be an optimal option. Though having weaknesses like assuming no changes in cultures over time and presupposing sameness between cultures and national cultures (Taras & Steel, 2009), the model continues to be utilized for cross-country research. In marketing, scholars embrace these dimensions as they are uncomplicated, feasible and convenient to use (Soares et al., 2007). Hence, the work of Hofstede (2011) shall also be suitable when exploring the impact of cultures on envy and consumer behavior.

In Hofstede's model, individualism-collectivism is indeed one of the most common dimensions. Two sides of this dimension have been discussed in other cultural models under dissimilar names. An example would be self-orientation and collectivity-orientation of Parsons and Shills (1951). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) also developed a similar dimension called relationships among people. Moreover, similarities exist between individualism-collectivism and independent-interdependent self-construct since they all focus on how one defines his or her identity. Interestingly, unlike the self-construct, individualism and collectivism discretely categorize people, which lead to oversimplification (Wong & Ahuvia, 1988). Nevertheless, because countries score differently on individualism-collectivism (Hofstede Insights, 2019), they are indeed two sides of a continuum, not extreme categories.

The primary difference between individualism and collectivism lies in the attachment one has for his or her social group. In specific, collectivists consider themselves as part of a group while individualists appreciate the uniqueness among individuals (Hofstede, 2011; Triandis, 2018). As a result, collectivists often comply with group practices whereas individualists are diverse in their responses to the same circumstance (Mesquita, 2001). Greater entrepreneurship in individualist countries (Morris et al., 1993) also emphasizes

their non-uniformity. Having valued personal identity, individualists are expected to favor personal preferences over social norms.

Based on the previous arguments, it is per chance that collectivists experience envy more frequently than individualists. According to Festinger (1954), people who are used to comparing with others are more severely affected by envy. This is true to collectivists since they often consider in-group members as benchmarks for self-assessment (Hofstede, 2011). In contrast, there exist examples of low social comparison in individualist cultures. Grinblatt et al. (2008) find that when buying cars, Finnish consumers, who score highly on individualism (Hofstede Insights, 2019), pay attention to their features more than the purchases of their neighbors. Such behavior might result from the appreciation of privacy among individualists. For instance, in Finland, sauna symbolizes equality and appreciation of personal space (Gannon & Pillai, 2010). American also prefer a wider personal space compared to collectivists such as Mexican (Crouch, 2004).

Similar to envy, envy-related consumption is anticipated to be more common among collectivists as opposed to individualists. Belk (1985) and Monkhouse et al. (2012) underline that materialism could be stronger in Japan, China and other collectivist countries. This is legitimate considering their Confucian tradition of face-saving and admiration seeking (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Monkhouse et al., 2012). The strong sense of group-membership in collectivist cultures (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998; Hofstede, 2011) also leads to a more intense need to keep up with the Joneses. The second hypothesis is specified accordingly:

H2: Collectivists will have higher benign envy related purchase intention than individualists.

Despite the demand for group integration, it is possible that fear of being envied (Romani, 2016) and self-efficacy among collectivists (Triandis, 2001) would limit their purchase intention. However, according to Wong and Ahuvia (1998), since the

capitalistic era, people in collectivist countries have placed a more immense importance on prosperity and success than on humility. Not to mention the born of social media, which has allowed people to consider envy as a part of human nature and reduce their self-control (Samuel, 2018). The fact that teenagers, who are strongly impacted by capitalism (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998), spend the highest amount of time on online platforms (Sun, 2017) connects the arguments above and confirms the diminishing impact of self-effacement on collectivists.

Notwithstanding, controversy remains when America, a well-known individualist country, has the most excessive consumption of luxury goods by 2018 (Statista, 2019b). A paper by Moritz and Schmid (2013) further found a significant relationship between American purchase decision and social comparison. Nevertheless, it might be that conspicuous consumption is common in individualist and collectivist cultures, but the reason behind it is different. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) state that individualists consume luxury goods for personal needs instead of self-exposure. Additionally, since most evidence on envy purchases of individualists is from America (Matt, 2003; Moritz & Schmid, 2013), envious consumption could be a routine practice in this country regardless of cultures. Whatever the case is, further investigation is essential to assess the second hypothesis.

2.9. Conceptual framework

Conceptual frameworks are useful in forming foundations for scientific research (Adom et al., 2018). Based on the knowledge from previous literature, a conceptual framework is also developed in customization for this thesis. In the model, relevant constructs and their relationships and the hypotheses are summarized, which provide a general picture of the thesis and help address the research questions. Available gaps on the topic of interest are also reflected through the connections between research questions and the framework.

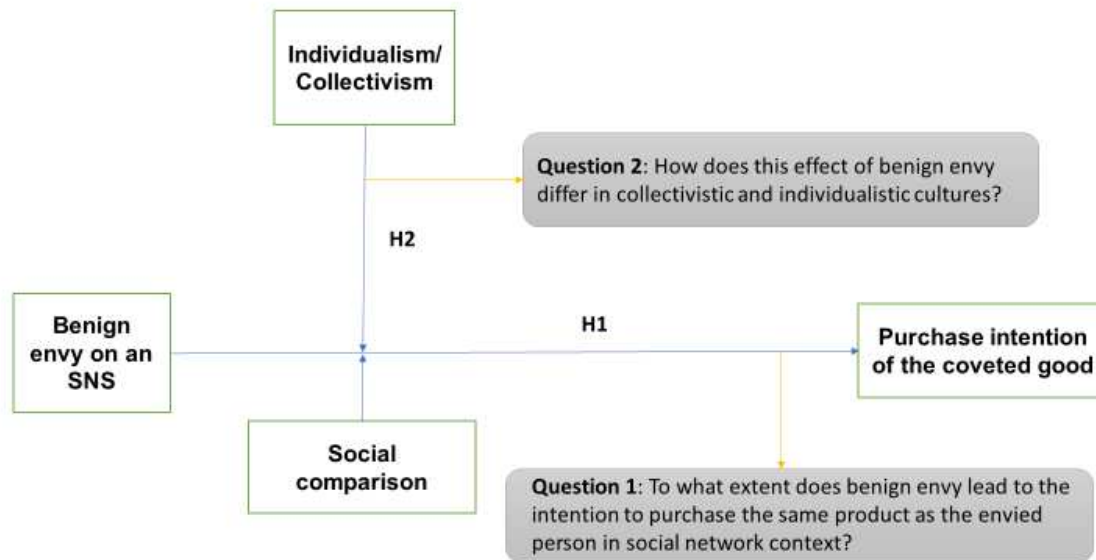


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

2.10. Conclusion

Envy is the pain of being inferior to similar others, which leads to a desire to pull down the advantages of the haves to equal that of the have-nots or an incentive to level up oneself. Malicious envy with its destructive nature characterizes the first consequence while benign envy, a constructive form of envy, represents the second consequence. The combination of pain in envy and envy subtypes is known as the Pain-driven Dual Envy Theory. Beside categorization, difficulties arise in defining envy because of confusing concepts and linguistic differences.

Though envy has been known for its influence on human behavior, only recently did researchers recognize the potential of envy in shaping consumer decisions. As found by van de Ven et al. (2011a), being benignly envious increases the purchase intention of goods possessed by the envied person but experiencing malicious envy directs people to acquire another similar product. Since the desired item is known in benign envy but not in malicious envy, benign envy is more useful in developing marketing strategies.

Changes in the impact of envy might arise because of technological development and globalization. SNS exaggerates benign envy by reducing identity variations, keeping

users engaged in social comparison and increasing narcissism. Unfortunately, research combining online envy with consumer behavior are limited. Regarding cultural impacts, disagreements exist in how collectivists and individualists respond to benign envy. As cultures change continuously, conclusions of Hofstede (2011) might also contain certain errors that need verification. Therefore, future research should discuss this question: “To what extent does benign envy result in the purchase of similar, but not the same, products and the difference of this consequence because of cultures”.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section consists of explanations on academic approaches and means to fulfill research objectives. Particularly, how secondary and primary data are utilized in the research is summarized. Regarding the primary data, a thorough description of the structure and design of the questionnaire is featured, followed by the specification on the sampling process. Strengths and weaknesses of the research method and data collecting tool are also discussed. Consequently, a respondent profile is compiled to give a comprehensive picture of the sample and its impact on the results of the thesis.

3.1. Secondary data

Secondary sources are employed in this thesis to develop a thorough review of previous literature through which hypotheses are proposed. Furthermore, they are useful in guiding the research process, identifying relevant constructs and gaps in the current knowledge of envy. These form the conceptual framework and support or reconsider findings from primary data. Secondary data is also integrated into the questionnaire design; nevertheless, to maintain consistency and readability, details about these sources shall be found on section 3.2.1.

To be specific, the study of Festinger (1954) identifies conditions through which envy is elicited, which is when people compare themselves with others of higher statuses. After that, papers of Belk (2011) and Lange et al. (2018) are utilized to define subtypes of

envy and why benign envy should be the focus of this thesis. Additionally, research of Krasnova et al. (2015) and Wu (2015) play critical roles in introducing social media envy. The discussion then shifts to the effects of benign envy on purchase intentions based on findings of Van de Ven et al. (2011a) and Taylor and Strutton (2014). These articles place the basis for the first hypothesis. Ultimately, research of Hofstede (2011), Wong (1998) and Monkhouse et al. (2012) specify characteristics of individualists and collectivists and their effect on envy, which form the second hypothesis. Among the secondary sources, that of van de Ven et al. (2011a) and Wu (2015) constitute the base articles. Van de Ven et al. (2011a) are among the limited researchers studying the impacts of benign envy on consumer behavior whereas Wu (2015) is the first one to mention how cultures affect benign envy.

3.2. Primary data

This section addresses the choice of research and data collection method. Selecting a methodology is a vital step in academic research as it affects the results and how research objectives are fulfilled. Furthermore, a suitable method is correlated to the reliability of the findings. However, considering the limited resources of a bachelor's thesis, the methodology should correspond to the available time, budget and manpower.

There are two major types of research methodology: qualitative and quantitative method. Strengths and weaknesses exist for both sides; therefore, the optimal choice is dependent on the topic, objectives and sample of the study. According to Sumerack (n.d.) and Yilmaz (2013), qualitative research is useful in gaining a deeper understanding of the problem and parties involved. Since envy theories are well-developed, there is hardly a need for this. On the contrary, the demand for theory testing remains, here is on the effect of cultures on envy, which calls for quantitative research. Quantitative approaches are also appropriate when variables and relationships between them are identifiable (Yilmaz, 2013). Within the scale of this paper, benign envy, individualism-collectivism and purchase intention are variables while how benign envy increases purchase intention with the mediating impact of cultural dimensions represents the predicted relationship.

3.2.1. Questionnaire design

From the basis of quantitative research, a survey was employed to collect data on social media envy and consumer purchase intention. There are three types of survey: self-administered survey, telephone survey and survey via personal interview. Due to the restriction in time and money, the self-administered survey was deemed to be the most suitable option. Moreover, self-administered surveys allow the researcher to reach participants from various countries (Cooper & Schindler, 2014), which is beneficial as this thesis involves Finnish and Vietnamese respondents. An example of a self-administered survey is an online survey distributed through several communication channels. As opposed to a physical survey, an internet-based survey reduces operating costs such as paper and printing, offer more response time and provide ease in summarizing and analysing data (Explorance, 2019). Self-administered questionnaires also enhance confidentiality as researchers are not available when the survey is filled. This is vital since respondents often avoid subjective answers regarding envy (Krasnova et al., 2015).

Diving deeper into the questionnaire, there were three core parts. Questions in the first section were divided into those that examined:

- the group orientation of the respondents (individualism versus collectivism)
- the social comparison tendency
- the level of benign envy among participants

After the first section, respondents were asked to imagine of a friend who was similar or had mutual hobbies. Those who could not think of a friend like that continued with the question “Do you have any friends similar to you?”. If the answer was “no”, they would be thanked and ended the survey process. Those who replied “yes” would continue with the case study.

In the case study section, a story about an online friend and his or her SNS post was utilized to generate benign envy. The name of the friend was specified as X. The story is as follows:

One day, when you were scrolling down your social media, you saw X posted a picture about a luxurious trip (living in a high-class hotel and eating expensive food) to a city that you have always wanted to visit. X wrote a caption along with the pictures sharing how beautiful the place is and the amazing 5-star service that reflects the luxurious nature of their travel. X said that they were extremely happy. When you asked X how he or she obtained the trip, X shared that they worked hard (doing multiple jobs) over the past few months to save for this trip.

By underlining the common interest or background between participants and the imaginary friend, the story embraces similarity, an antecedent of benign envy. In addition, deservingness was emphasized through how hard the envied had worked to achieve the good. Self-relevance and perceived-control were also manipulated by stating the destination of the trip as where respondents had wanted to visit and could do so by exerting oneself. Measurement questions, instructions and pictures were added to assist the understanding of participants towards the story. According to Krasnova et al. (2015), travel and leisure are the most common domains of envy on SNS. Chou (2017) and Lin et al. (2018) also highlight that experiential information sharing could result in higher envy than material one. Moreover, as people are more likely to post statuses about the service they have enjoyed than products they have purchased, utilizing the luxurious journey as a coveted good was suitable.

Following the measurement questions was the behavioral section that investigated the experience of envy after reading the case and the likeliness of participants to purchase the good presented in the questionnaire. The survey ended with the socio-demographic questions. Since some respondents might feel offensive when being asked for such information, allowing them to answer these questions last could increase the response rate (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Specifically, these questions focused on ages, marital statuses and nationalities. More information about the questionnaire could be found in Appendix 1.

Most of the questions/statements were designed with a 7-point Likert Scale instead of a 5-point scale because envy is a complicated emotion (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Diving deeper into the scale, 1 represented "strongly disagree", 4 was "neither agree nor disagree" and 7 equaled "strongly agree". Exceptions will be presented later in the result analyses.

Across the statements, those examining the comparison pattern of respondents were employed from the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) of Gibbons and Bunk (1999) while the ones gauging the group orientation were retrieved from the work of Sivada, Bruvold and Nelson (2008). Continue from that, items investigating benign envy and purchase intention were derived from the Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (BeMaS) (Lange & Crusius, 2015). Finally, questions exploring the purchase intention of respondents were adopted from the research of Lange et al. (2018). The fact that these questions have been tested by other scholars offers face validity.

3.2.2. Data collection

Two samples were embraced in the thesis as representatives of high individualism and collectivism. Considering the nationality and residence of the author, Vietnamese and Finnish were chosen. According to Hofstede Insights (2019), Finnish score (63) on individualism, which is substantially higher than that of Vietnam (20). Because the heterogeneity of respondents would not markedly affect the data, citizens of these countries from all generations could participate in the survey. However, to ensure that respondents were familiar with social media of any kind, the link to the survey was posted on social media channels and distributed to participants through private SNS.

The survey was opened on February 2nd, 2019 and closed on February 14th, 2019. Concerning the sampling approach, convenience sampling was adopted. Particularly, participants were selected from a conveniently accessible pool of acquaintances and students in Vietnam and Finland. Although this method could not produce samples that

were most representative of the populations, it was suitable concerning the scale and budget of a bachelor's thesis.

The respondents were informed about the field of the questionnaire before deciding on participation. However, the detailed topic was not specified to avoid influencing the respondents in their pre-attempts. All responses were anonymous, and other potential harms were unidentified. Reminders were employed shall sufficient answers had not been collected after a certain amount of time. However, they did not contain any phrases to be considered as compulsions by the respondents.

3.2.3. Respondent profile

The number of responses was 226, exceeding the target of 200 replies from both Vietnamese and Finnish. Nevertheless, 20 respondents answering “no” to questions “Can you think of a [similar friend] like that?” and “Do you have a friend that is similar to you?” were excluded from the survey process. The questionnaire eventually accumulated 206 respondents. Among them, 105 were Vietnamese, which accounted for 51% of the answers. The remaining 101 were Finnish and made up 49%. There was not a dramatic difference in sample size, which reduced the possibility of having one sample outperformed the other.

The age of respondents spread from 17 to 70. The majority of participants fell within the 15 to 24 range for both nationality groups with 97% for Finnish and 60% for Vietnamese. In specific, the Vietnamese sample saw more diversification in terms of age. The pie charts below give more detail on the percentages of Finnish and Vietnamese in dissimilar age groups.

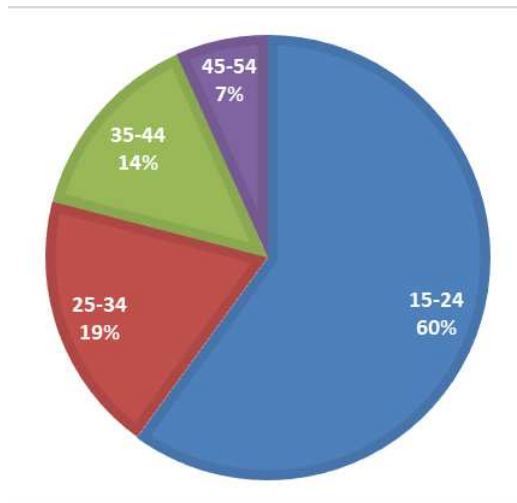


Figure 3: Ages of Finnish respondents

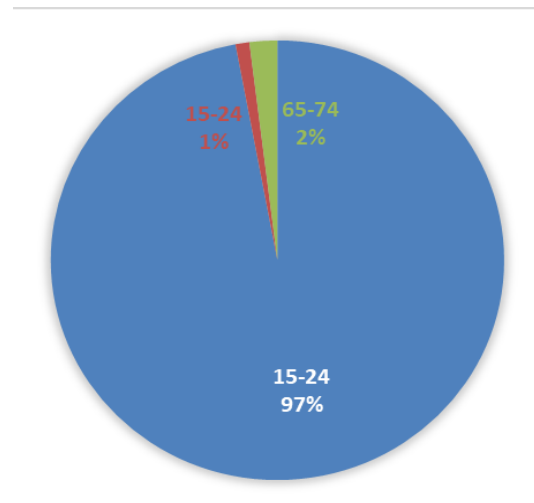


Figure 4: Ages of Vietnamese respondents

Concerning gender, females outnumbered males at the aggregate level. Nonetheless, this pattern varied between the two samples. To illustrate, 51% of Finnish were males while this number was 25% for Vietnamese. Across the samples, only one person decided not to disclose his or her gender by selecting the "other" option, and this made up 1% of the Vietnamese participants. Explicit information about the gender components could be observed in Figure 5 and 6.

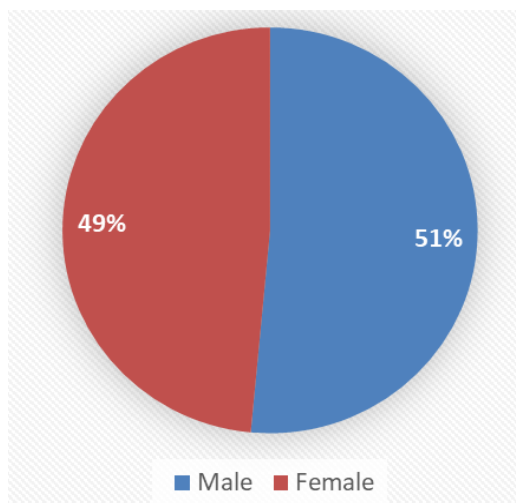


Figure 5: Gender of Finnish respondents

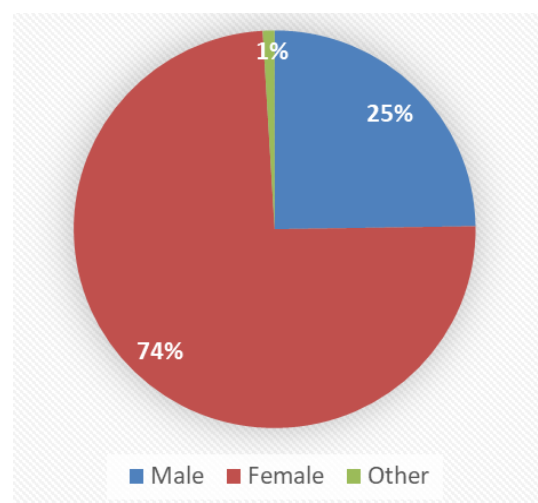


Figure 6: Gender of Vietnamese respondents

As most respondents were from 15-24 years old, it was expected that they were unmarried. In fact, 97% of participants from Finland were single and 3% were married

(see Figure 7). This number is less overwhelming for Vietnamese which had more diversification in marital status. In particular, 77% of Vietnamese were single, 20% were married, 2% were divorced and 1% were living separately from their partners (see Figure 8). This multiform of marital status corresponded to their variety of age groups as mentioned above.

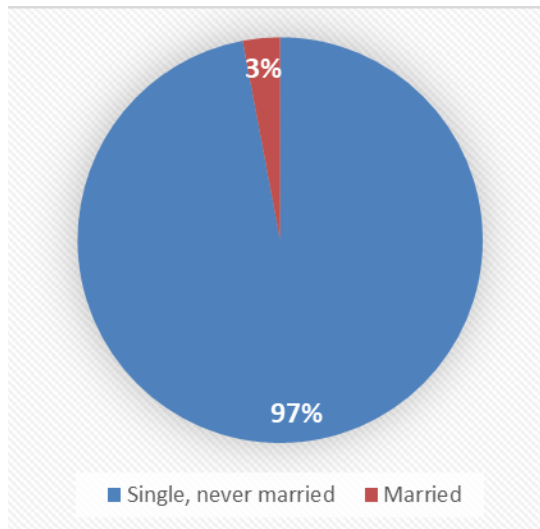


Figure 7: Marital status Finnish respondents

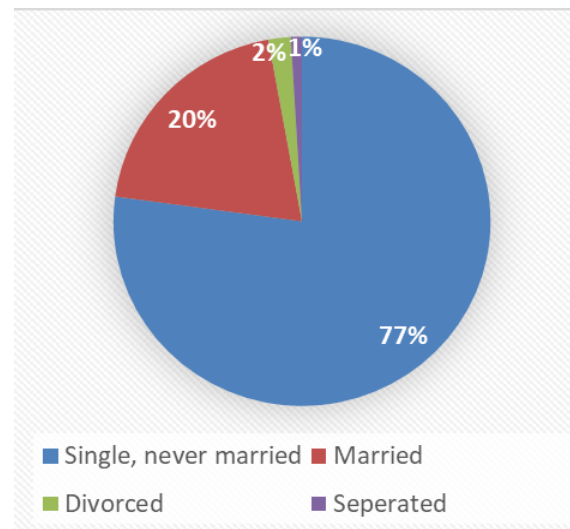


Figure 8: Marital status of Vietnamese respondents

IV. FINDINGS

The objective of this section is to elaborate on the relevant findings of the research after the collected data has been tested and analyzed. In particular, the reliability of constructs will be specified before determining those that could be used for subsequent analyses. After that, the hypotheses are examined for significance at 95% confidence level to answer the research questions. Figures on the measures of significance and comparable statistics are presented for each examination.

4.1. Reliability tests

This section summarizes the reliability of each subscale being used to investigate the hypotheses. The results are presented separately for Finnish and Vietnamese

respondents for comparisons. It is noteworthy that the measurement and the socio-demographic sections are not tested for reliability since they include solely single questions. The following table displays Cronbach's Alphas across relevant constructs.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha_Finnish	Cronbach's Alpha_Vietnamese	N of items
Collectivism	0.623	0.724	3
Individualism	0.634	0.682	4
Social comparison	0.759	0.803	11
Benign envy	0.860	0.848	5
Purchase Intention	0.867	0.865	4
Reasons for purchase	0.834	0.854	4

Table 1: Cronbach's Alphas of constructs

Most constructs had Cronbach's Alphas above 0.7, indicating internal reliability (Cortina, 1993) and shall be employed for supplementary testing. Regarding Individualism and Collectivism, 4 statements existed for each construct. The factor loading of the last statement: "My happiness depends on that of people around me" had the value of 0.256 < 0.5, which suggested a non-significant correlation with other statements. Hence, it was excluded from the subscale. On the contrary, as factor loadings of all items under Individualism were above 0.5, no statement was removed. Individualism and Collectivism had Cronbach's Alphas higher than 0.6 for both Finnish and Vietnamese samples. Despite being less desirable than the common standard of 0.7, such value is acceptable as suggested by Hair et al. (2015).

4.2. Measurement questions

Measurement questions explore the success of the researcher in generating benign envy among respondents. Factors contribute to the emergence of benign envy are deservingness of the envied and the luxury of the trip in the scenario. Because respondents of the survey had answered "yes" to the question: "Could you think of a

[similar friend] like that?" or "Do you have a friend who is similar to you?", the similarity between the envied and envier will not be discussed in the sections below.

4.2.1. Deservingness

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Do you think X deserves the trip?	206	5.83	1.04	0.07

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 4					
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Do you think X deserves the trip?	25.31	205	0.00	1.83	1.68	1.97

Figure 9: Deservingness testing

A one-sample t-test was employed to investigate the perceived deservingness after reading the story. It could be observed from Figure 9 that the level of deservingness was significantly higher than the normal score of 4 ($M = 5.83$, $SD = 1.04$, $t(205) = 25.305$, $p = 0.00$). Based on this result, respondents believed X was deserved of the luxurious trip and the manipulation for deservingness was successful.

4.2.2. Luxury

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Do you think X's travel is luxurious?	206	5.28	1.41	0.10

One-Sample Test	
	Test Value = 4

	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Do you think X's travel is luxurious?	13.00	205	0.00	1.28	1.08	1.47

Figure 10: Luxury testing

Another one sample t-test was conducted to examine the luxury of the trip in the scenario. According to Figure 10, the luxury score was significantly higher than the middle point of 4 ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.41$, $t(205) = 13.001$; $p = 0.00$). This indicates that respondents did perceive the trip as luxurious, and the manipulation for luxury was effective. Since both conditions on deservingness and luxury are met, the author could conclude that benign envy had been generated among participants.

4.2.3. Benign envy and online information consumption

Considering the importance of envy towards hypotheses testing, re-confirming the occurrence of envy among respondents is essential. To address this query, respondents were asked whether they would feel envy after reading the scenario. Because in English, "benign envy" is not commonly used, "envious" was employed instead. However, the construct being measured remained to be benign envy because of the manipulation in the measurement section above.

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Would you be envious of X?	206	3.49	1.73	0.12

One-Sample Test					
	Test Value = 4				
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

					Lower	Upper
Would you be envious of X?	-4.23	205	0.00	-0.51	-0.75	-0.27

Figure 11: Envy on social media testing

The average level of envy after reading the story ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.73$) was smaller than the normal score of 4, $t(205) = -4.229$; $p = 0.00$. Though this implies a low level of envy, because the mode was 5, most participants seemed to admit being envious of X, but some did not. To resolve this ambiguity, an open-ended question stated “In your opinion, which emotions do most people experience when they see their online friends post about [the luxurious trip] on social media websites?” was utilized.

Key emotions	Frequency (times)	Proportions of all the words mentioned
Envy	90	31.15%
Happy	53	18.34%
Jealousy	35	12.11%
Admiration	30	10.38%
Motivation	27	9.34%
Curiosity	14	4.84%
Surprise	13	4.50%
Amazement	10	3.46%
Sad	6	2.08%
Deservingness	5	1.73%
Frustration	4	1.38%
Resentment	2	0.69%

Table 2: Reflection on the key emotions of others after reading the story

After proper coding, the highest percentage (31.15%) of the words and phrases mentioned by respondents were related to envy. Since this question targeted at feelings of others, respondents appeared to acknowledge envy in projective settings but denied such emotion in direct contexts. This is similar to the finding of Krasnova et al. (2015).

Moreover, words related to benign envy such as happy, admiration and motivation accounted for the second, fourth and fifth highest proportions, which re-confirms the occurrence of benign envy after reading the scenario.

4.3. Hypotheses testing

The two hypotheses are investigated in order in the sub-sections below. Relevant assumptions are also examined and discussed.

4.3.1. Benign envy and purchase intention

This section investigates the first hypothesis. A linear regression model was run featuring purchase intention and envy as dependent and independent variables.

H1: Online benign enviers would intend to purchase the same product or service posted by an advantaged party

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.166 ^a	0.028	0.023	1.21398
a. Predictors: (Constant), Would you be envious of X?				

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.525	1	8.525	5.784	.017 ^b
	Residual	300.644	204	1.474		
	Total	309.169	205			
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase_Intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Would you be envious of X?						

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.184	0.191		21.927	0.000

Would you be envious of X?	0.118	0.049	0.166	2.405	0.017
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase_Intention					

Figure 12: H1 testing

Benign envy significantly predicted purchase intention of the luxurious trip possessed by the envied. ($F(1, 204) = 5.784, p = 0.017$). According to the R-square, envy explained 2.8% of the changes in purchase intentions. Since R-square could be lower than 5% for psychological studies (Minitab Blog, 2014), this value is acceptable. Additionally, as this thesis does not aim to build a model that fully predicts purchase intention, such low R-square is understandable.

Based on the coefficient table in Figure 12, a suitable linear regression would be:

$$\text{Purchase Intention} = 4.184 + 0.118\text{Envy}$$

Because the slope of the function is greater than zero, benign envy positively affected purchase intention and the first hypothesis is supported. To be exact, when increasing or decreasing benign envy by one unit, purchase intention would increase or decrease by 0.118 unit respectively.

To enhance the validity of such result, the thesis also replicates the approach of Le (2015) in analyzing the relationship between envy, controlled buying and purchase intention.

H1: Online benign enviers would intend to purchase the same product or service posted by an advantaged party

Would you like to know where X purchased the trip?				
Yes = Benign envy; No = Controlled buying		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<i>I want to work hard to afford the same trip</i>	Benign envy	5.13	1.28	0.10
	Controlled buying	4.11	1.57	0.21
<i>Other people will also be motivated to obtain the trip</i>	Benign envy	5.28	1.032	0.08
	Controlled buying	4.76	1.027	0.14
<i>I am plotting my course of</i>	Benign envy	4.67	1.43	0.12

<i>action on how I will obtain a trip similar to this.</i>	Controlled buying	3.30	1.68	0.23
<i>I will focus my energies on purchasing a similar type of trip.</i>	Benign envy	4.43	1.47	0.12
	Controlled buying	3.06	1.70	0.23

Figure 13: Effects of benign envy and controlled buying on purchase intention

After reading the story in the survey, respondents answered whether they wanted to ask X where to purchase the trip. Answering "yes" implied benign envy. Contrarily, individuals answering "no" experienced either malicious or controlled buying (van de Ven et al. (2009) Milovic (2014). Controlled buying would be the most possible case since malicious enviers consume an identical but not the same good as the one mentioned by the envied (van de Ven et al., 2011a), which is unidentified in the scenario. Independent t-tests were utilized to compare the means across questions of the subscale.

Particularly, benign enviers had a significantly higher mean ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.28$) than controlled buyers ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.57$), $t(204) = 4.70$, $p = 0.00$ for the question: "I want to work hard to afford the same trip". The same applied in the case of projective thinking (question of "Other will also be motivated to obtain the trip"; $M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.032$ for benign envy and $M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.027$ for controlled buying), $t(204) = 3.21$, $p = 0.00$. The last two statements had lower means than the previous ones, but their means of benign envy remained higher than their means of controlled buying. Particularly, the statement "I am plotting my course of action on how I will obtain a trip similar to this" had $M = 4.67$; $SD = 1.43$ for benign envy and $M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.68$ for controlled buying ($t(204) = 5.8$, $p = 0.00$). With "I will focus my energies on purchasing a similar type of trip", $M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.47$ for benign envy while $M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.70$ for controlled buying. The difference was significant at $t(204) = 5.65$, $p = 0.00$. Overall, experiencing envy led to higher purchase intention than controlled buying (the significance values of the tests as specified above could be found in Appendix 2).

4.3.2. Assumptions testing

Before examining the second hypothesis, some assumptions should be noted:

- Vietnamese and Finnish were representatives of collectivists and individualists.
- Both Vietnamese and Finnish participated in social comparison.

Independent t-tests for each assumption were performed as follow:

Group Statistics					
What is your nationality?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
COLLECTIVISM	Finnish	101	4.46	1.22	0.12
	Vietnamese	105	4.87	1.04	0.10
INDIVIDUALISM	Finnish	101	2.56	0.90	0.09
	Vietnamese	105	2.70	0.99	0.10
SOCIAL_COMPARISON	Finnish	101	4.512	0.72	0.07
	Vietnamese	105	4.506	0.92	0.09

Figure 14: Assumptions testing

Figure 14 shows that Finnish and Vietnamese were significantly different on collectivism ($t(204) = -2.61, p = 0.01$). Because the calculated mean of Vietnamese ($M = 4.87, SD = 1.04$) was higher than that of Finnish ($M = 4.46, SD = 1.22$), Vietnamese was more collectivist than Finnish. Interestingly, when repeating the process for individualism, a non-significant difference between Finnish and Vietnamese was found ($t(204) = -1.07, p = 0.29$). Therefore, though Finnish was less collectivist than Vietnamese, they could not be considered as pure individualists. Nonetheless, the higher level of collectivism among Vietnamese is adequate to continue testing the impact of culture on envy consumption.

Moving into the second assumption, there existed no significant difference between Finnish and Vietnamese on the tendency to perform social comparison ($t(204) = -3.43, p = 0.96$). However, because the means of both nationalities were higher than the normal score of 4 ($M = 4.506, SD = 0.92$ and $M = 4.512, SD = 0.72$ respectively), Vietnamese and Finnish tended to socially compare themselves with others. This shows a positive sign since social comparison is a presumption of benign envy and is a

universal trait so there should be no significant difference between the two samples (the significance values of the tests as specified above could be found in Appendix 3).

4.3.3. Individualism-Collectivism and envy-related purchase intentions

Since all assumptions for the second hypothesis are valid, it is possible to examine H2. Regarding this, a two-way ANOVA was performed with purchase intention as a dependent variable and nationality of the respondents as a fixed factor. Another fixed factor was a new variable, ENVYNEW, which was computed based on the median envy level. Specifically, answers with values lower than 4 were labeled "-1" and represented low benign envy while those with values equal to 4 were marked as "0", indicating being neutral to envy. Finally, those with values greater than 4 were labeled as "1" and implied a high level of envy.

H2: Collectivists will have higher benign envy related purchase intention than individualists

Descriptive Statistics				
Dependent Variable:	PURCHASE			
ENVYNEW		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low envy	Finnish	3.72	1.34	32
	Vietnamese	4.80	1.18	62
	Total	4.43	1.34	94
Neutral	Finnish	3.92	0.98	19
	Vietnamese	4.75	0.98	19
	Total	4.34	1.05	38
High envy	Finnish	4.73	0.99	50
	Vietnamese	5.38	1.20	24
	Total	4.94	1.10	74
Total	Finnish	4.26	1.20	101
	Vietnamese	4.92	1.17	105
	Total	4.60	1.23	206

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable:	PURCHASE				

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	51.734 ^a	5	10.35	8.04	0.00
Intercept	3475.910	1	3475.91	2700.42	0.00
ENVYNEW	25.297	2	12.65	9.83	0.00
NATION	30.427	1	30.43	23.64	0.00
ENVYNEW * NATION	1.761	2	0.88	0.68	0.51
Error	257.435	200	1.29		
Total	4660.313	206			
Corrected Total	309.169	205			
a. R Squared = .167 (Adjusted R Squared = .147)					

Figure 15: H2 testing

A significant relationship between nationality and purchase intention was found ($F(1, 205) = 23.64$; $p = 0.00$). Particularly, Vietnamese had higher purchase intentions than Finnish at all levels of envy ($M = 4.8, 4.75, 5.38$ compared to $M = 3.72, 3.92, 4.73$). Envy also significantly impacted consumer preferences ($F(2, 205) = 9.83$; $p = 0.00$) such that high envy resulted in higher purchase intentions than low and neutral envy in both Vietnamese and Finnish cases ($M = 5.38, 4.73$ as opposed to $M = 4.75, 3.92$ and $M = 4.8, 3.72$). However, the interaction between envy and nationality on purchase intention was non-significant ($F(2, 205) = 0.68$; $p = 0.51$). As a result, the second hypothesis of “Collectivists will have higher benign envy related purchase intention benign envy than individualists” is rejected. Because the thesis does not examine all factors that impact purchase intention, R-square = 16.7% is small. However, it is higher than 2.8% of the test on H1, which might be due to the greater number of variables.

Descriptive Statistics				
Dependent Variable:	PURCHASE			
COLLECTNEW		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low	Low envy	4.41	1.09	58
	Neutral	4.24	1.05	30
	High envy	4.90	0.96	44

	Total	4.53	1.07	132
High	Low envy	4.47	1.68	36
	Neutral	4.69	1.06	8
	High envy	4.99	1.29	30
	Total	4.71	1.48	74
Total	Low envy	4.43	1.34	94
	Neutral	4.34	1.05	38
	High envy	4.94	1.10	74
	Total	4.60	1.23	206

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable:	PURCHASE				
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	15.352 ^a	5	3.07	2.09	0.07
Intercept	2958.142	1	2958.14	2013.59	0.00
COLLECTNEW	1.393	1	1.39	0.95	0.33
ENVYNEW	11.125	2	5.56	3.79	0.02
COLLECTNEW * ENVYNEW	0.749	2	0.37	0.25	0.78
Error	293.817	200	1.47		
Total	4660.313	206			
Corrected Total	309.169	205			
a. R Squared = .050 (Adjusted R Squared = .026)					

Figure 16: Follow-up H2 testing

Another two-way ANOVA was performed having replaced nationality by the level of collectivism. COLLECTNEW was created based on the collectivism of respondents. Specifically, those who scored greater than the median of 5 were high on collectivism while the remaining were low on this dimension. According to Figure 16, differences in collectivism did not significantly influence purchase intentions ($F(1, 205) = 0.95$, $p = 0.33$). The interaction between collectivism and envy on purchase intentions was also non-significant at $F(2, 205) = 0.37$, $p = 0.78$.

Shall nationality and collectivism not produce meaningful results, they were replaced by social comparison. Because social comparison forms the basis through which envy is born, how it interacts with benign envy might affect purchase intention. For this test, a new variable, SOCOMP_ANOVA, was created based on social comparison level of respondents. Particularly, responses that scored higher than the median of 4.45 were noted as "1" and represented a high level of social comparison. In contrast, those with values lower or equal to 4.45 were noted as "-1" and represented a low level.

Descriptive Statistics				
Dependent Variable:	PURCHASE			
ENVYNEW		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Low Envy	Low comparison	3.81	1.20	48
	High comparison	5.08	1.16	46
	Total	4.43	1.34	94
Neutral	Low comparison	3.84	1.02	19
	High comparison	4.83	0.85	19
	Total	4.34	1.05	38
High Envy	Low comparison	4.70	0.95	31
	High comparison	5.11	1.18	43
	Total	4.94	1.10	74
Total	Low comparison	4.10	1.16	98
	High comparison	5.05	1.12	108
	Total	4.60	1.23	206

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable:	PURCHASE				
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	63.625 ^a	5	12.72	10.36	0.00
Intercept	3684.351	1	3684.35	3000.97	0.00
SOCOMP_ANOVA	34.776	1	34.78	28.33	0.00
ENVYNEW	11.651	2	5.83	4.74	0.01

SOCOMP_ANOVA * ENVYNEW	7.517	2	3.76	3.06	0.05
Error	245.544	200	1.23		
Total	4660.313	206			
Corrected Total	309.169	205			
a. R Squared = .206 (Adjusted R Squared = .186)					

Figure 17: Additional testing on social comparison

As expected, the interaction between social comparison and benign envy significantly impacted purchase intention ($F(2, 205) = 3.06$; $p = 0.049$). The influence of social comparison on the motivation to purchase was also significant ($F(1, 205) = 28.33$; $p = 0.00$). Particularly, for low and neutral benign envy, a low social comparison led to purchase intentions that were lower than the middle point of 4 ($M = 3.81$ and $M = 3.84$ respectively). However, high social comparison increased the purchase intention of both samples substantially ($M = 4.83$ and $M = 5.08$). In terms of high benign envy, even when social comparison was low, respondents were more motivated to obtain the coveted good. As envy became higher, this effect was intensified (increases from $M = 4.70$ to $M = 5.11$). Considering $R\text{-square} = 0.206$, the model explains 20.6% of changes in purchase intentions.

V. DISCUSSIONS

The aim of this chapter is to provide answers to the research questions and shall be presented according to the conceptual framework. Particularly, the discussion starts with the influences of online benign envy on consumer decisions, followed by the behaviors of benign enviers in more and less collectivist cultures. Knowledge mentioned in the literature review is employed to analyze the findings. Improvements, consistencies or inconsistencies from previous studies will also be discussed in detail.

5.1. Performance of benign envy on customer decision making

Few studies have mentioned the impact of envy on consumption. Considered notable among them is the research of van de Ven et al. (2011a), which find that benign enviers preferred and were willing to pay more for the product possessed by the advantaged other. Employing a marginally different approach, Le (2015) differentiates the impact of benign envy and controlled buying on luxury fashion goods. According to Le (2015), people wishing to know more about the coveted good represent benign enviers and have higher purchase intentions.

Regarding this thesis, there was a significant relationship between benign envy and purchase intention. Specifically, higher benign envy led to higher motivation to obtain the luxurious good. This is consistent with the conclusion of van de Ven et al. (2011a). Since their study utilized experiments in offline settings, the fact that comparable results were found enhances the validity of the finding. Furthermore, the relevance of envy in various contexts highlights its pronounced and widespread influence on consumer behaviors.

The study of Le (2015) was also replicated in this thesis. Since benign enviers were more galvanized into acquiring the coveted good than controlled buyers, it is suggested that the impact of benign envy could dominate those of financial risks and risks of being envied. Moreover, having a similar finding with Le (2015) indicates the effectiveness of the thesis in generating benign envy despite the low subjective envy score. Besides quantitative studies, the result of this study also aligns with theories of Smith and Kim (2007), Belk (2011) and Lange et al. (2018) on how benign envy encourages prosocial actions in which the envious attempts to improve his or herself by following what the envied has done or achieved. Further research, as a result, could be more certain in employing this knowledge.

5.2. Cross-cultural comparison of benign envy and its related consumption

Being one of the exceptional researchers studying benign envy and cultural dimensions, Wu (2015) finds that collectivism increases social comparison, which positively influences benign envy but negatively affects perceived enjoyment of social media. This thesis, on the other hand, considers online users as potential consumers. Interestingly, though Vietnamese encouraged purchase intentions for the trip shared by the envied person, collectivism did not significantly impact consumer preferences. This implies that other factors besides collectivism and cultural dimensions might play decent roles in this relationship. According to Hofstede Insight (2019), despite being a collectivist country, Vietnam scores rather low in uncertainty avoidance. As this represents a relaxed attitude towards social norms, it somehow mediates the need to keep up with the group in collectivism. Wu (2015) also find that people with lower uncertainty avoidance are less likely to experience benign envy. The fact that Vietnamese were not dominantly higher than Finnish in collectivism within this study could be another cause behind the non-significant result.

Notwithstanding, Vietnam is known for its outstanding growth in luxury goods consumption. In 2019, Vietnam is expected to spend 1130 million US dollars on luxury items, an 8.9% increase from the previous year while Finland is expected to consume 961 million US dollars, only 1.8% increase from 2018 (Statista, 2019c; 2019d). This shows that materialism is high and still growing in Vietnam, which explains the more prominent score of Vietnamese in purchase intention.

It is noteworthy that the effect of nationality on purchase intention did not involve envy. This finding contradicts with the knowledge that because Vietnamese are more attached to their in-group members (Hofstede Insights, 2019), they are more likely to experience benign envy and have higher purchase intention. Nonetheless, the result is rational considering envy as a universal concept (Schoeck, 1969; Foster et al., 1972). This universality could be observed through how envy is incorporated into fairy tales and religions. Unfortunately, there is not enough academic evidence to decide which

conclusion will hold. There also exists the possibility that the non-significant interaction was found because of the limited sample size. Moreover, since most respondents were young adults and many Vietnamese participants were studying in Western countries, the distinctions in cultures might have not been fully developed or have been lost to some extent.

Shall it not be collectivism or nationality, other factors might mediate the relationship between envy and the motivation to consume. The focus was thus shifted to social comparison since it is a presumption of envy (Festinger, 1954) and like collectivism, it is related to how people define their identity based on others. After analyzing the data, the interaction between social comparison and envy significantly impacted purchase intentions. Wu (2015) also finds that individualism-collectivism affects social comparison before it leads to benign envy. As a result, this cultural dimension might not connect directly to benign envy but needs social comparison as a linking factor. This explains why social comparison affected envy consumption, but collectivism did not.

5.3. Revised conceptual framework

Having mixed conclusions regarding the hypotheses, it is essential to revise the conceptual framework (see Figure 18). The original framework embraces two propositions: benign envy enhances purchase intention and individualism-collectivism mediates this relationship. Because the first hypothesis is significant, the constructs of benign envy, purchase intention and the arrow showing their connections remain in the model. However, since the impact of collectivism on envy-related purchase intention is not significant, the construct on group orientation is excluded. Social comparison, in contrast, is preserved to reflect its interaction with benign envy on consumer preferences. Thus, the new conceptual framework is presented as follow:

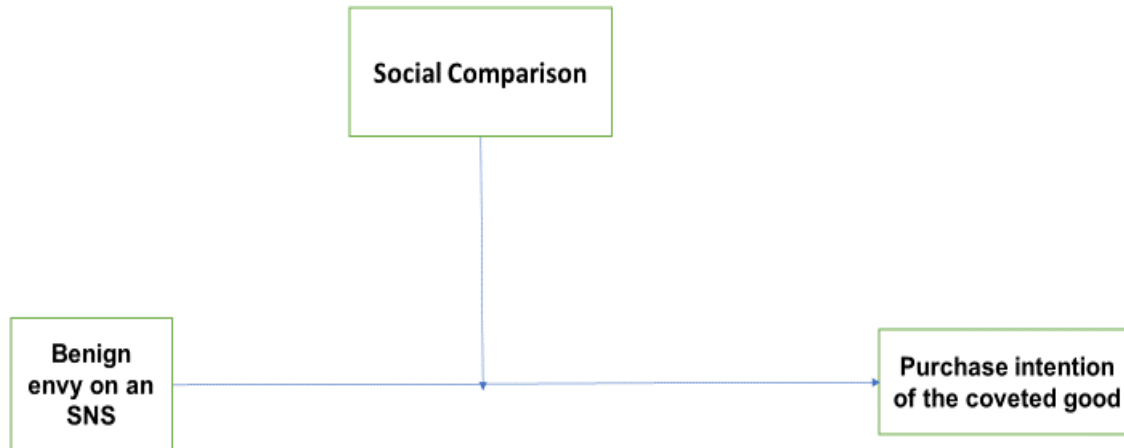


Figure 18: Revised conceptual framework

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion section includes a brief summary on the key findings of the thesis and an explication on how these could be implemented in International Business environment. Limitations of the study are elaborated to determine improvements and suggestions for subsequent research of similar topics or approaches.

6.1. Main findings

Despite its limited number of responses, this thesis has succeeded to some extent in answering the research questions. In particular, benign envy positively impacts purchase intention. Such effect of benign envy also outweighs that of controlled buying. These support the first hypothesis (H1). Furthermore, since this thesis employed online instead of offline settings, envy proves its substantial impact on human behavior across various contexts.

Another significant connection was found between nationalities and group orientation. Vietnamese appeared to have more collective characteristics like valuing interpersonal relationships and harmony among groups. The purchase intention of Vietnamese towards coveted goods was also higher than that of Finnish. However, such impacts of

benign envy and group orientation on consumer preferences were independent. The second hypothesis (H2) is rejected accordingly. Thus, marketers do not need to satisfy both conditions to encourage consumption among social media users. Nonetheless, the influence of the interaction between envy and social comparison on purchase intention was valid; hence, it is the variations of how frequent people compare themselves with others, not their group identity, that determine decisions to consume because of envy.

6.2. Implications for International Business

Although the scale of this thesis is not adequate to provide highly reliable findings, it could act as a source of reference or as a support for other academic works. Particularly, understanding the influence of benign envy on consumption would assist marketers in maximizing sales and maintaining a competitive advantage against competitors. Additionally, by narrowing to social media context, this research presents companies with more effective and inexpensive marketing strategies. For instance, knowing that individuals are willing to buy the goods posted by the advantaged other, marketers could offer products and/or services for reviews from sources of benign envy such as celebrities and influencers. Because the similarity between parties in the social comparison process determines envy, normal SNS users shall also be engaged. As online posts are seen by a variety of people and the cost of giving goods to these users is not dramatically high, businesses could reduce their expenses significantly while enhancing their benefits.

To further intensify purchase intention, information on the topics that currently produce envy could be obtained to design products and services accordingly. Moreover, since experiential good is more capable of generating envy (Lin & Utz, 2015), injecting experiential elements into online advertisements would increase the benefits brought by benign envy. To illustrate, firms should develop advertising campaigns that allow social media users to share their experience of services or improvements after using a product. The same practices could be applied in offline circumstances.

Besides investigating how benign envy effects consumer preferences, this thesis also fills the gap of extent knowledge through the inclusion of cultural factors. A non-significant impact of collectivism on envy-related purchase intention suggests that international advertising campaigns could be done without the constraint of cultural differences. This finding is beneficial to multinational corporations since it helps decrease the cost of customizing marketing efforts across nations. Nonetheless, since Vietnamese have higher purchase intention than Finnish, encouraging consumption is more important in Finland than in Vietnam. Fortunately, Finnish companies could increase sales by including social comparison elements into their marketing strategies. Vietnamese firms would also benefit from this as social comparison not only encourages consumption from individuals with low benign envy but also intensifies purchase intention of those with high benign envy. Examples of successful employment of social comparison include the use of storytelling, slogans, hashtags and social media check-in to inspire people to keep up with the groups.

6.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Limitations are unavoidable in the scale of a bachelor's thesis. The first and fundamental drawback lies in the use of the survey as a data collection method. Questionnaires could cause errors in self-reporting processes due to the absence of researchers to probe the questions (Bergman et al., 2011; Cohen-Charash & Larson, 2017). Because the case study allows respondents to imagine and come up with the envied person, exaggerations could exist and lead to skewed data, which adversely affect the results. In this case, adopting experiments like van de Ven et al. (2011a) did would be advantageous. Analyzing social media posts is another plausible option because this could provide researchers with real data on how individuals act upon online envy. The only difficulty is in selecting suitable messages for analyses.

In terms of sampling, weaknesses lie in the employment of two nationalities as representatives of collectivists and individualists. Though the choices are based on the scores of Finnish and Vietnamese on individualism on Hofstede Insights (2019), in reality, subcultures and globalization could influence the data. For instance, Oyserman

et al. (2002) find a mix of collectivists and individualists in America and most Asian nations except China. The same issue might occur in Vietnam and Finland. Because this limitation is connected to an assumption of equality between cultures and national cultures from the model of Hofstede, subsequent studies should investigate other frameworks or engage various ones for comparison. Shall other models suggest significant effects of cultural factors on envy consumption, analyses are essential to identify strengths, weaknesses and when to apply each model.

Back to individualism-collectivism, Vietnamese have a higher score in collectivism, but Finnish do not in regard to individualism. Therefore, Finland is a less collectivist country, not an individualist one. Because this might be the reason behind the non-significant interaction between collectivism and envy on purchase intention, featuring countries with more apparent differences in group orientation in later research would be advantageous. Additionally, since the sample is formed from convenience sampling, it could not perfectly represent the Finnish and Vietnamese population. As a result, a higher scale and scope should be applied for subsequent studies. Moreover, because Finnish and Vietnamese could embrace other dimensions of Hofstede (2011), engaging multiple countries as individualists and collectivists could enhance the reliability of the findings. Since most respondents of the survey are young adults and students, selecting a sample with more notable diversification in gender, age, marital status and other socio-demographic features might also result in more meaningful conclusions.

Although this thesis has made a step further by injecting cultures into envy consumption, the cultural factor being embraced is only one of many Hofstede's dimensions. Therefore, examining the influence of other dimensions or a combination of them could produce a more comprehensive picture. Furthermore, when studying group orientation, conducting the research in various regions within a nation might help limit the impacts of subcultures and geographical diversity. For example, the generalizability of the results could be reduced if respondents living in the countryside with restricted access to Internet and social media find it difficult to participate in the questionnaire. Moreover, Westernization could occur in big cities of collectivist nations, causing decreases in

collectivism. Changes in cultures over time might also become a concern (Zheng et al., 2018); hence, if resources are available, conducting longitudinal research on cultures and consumer behaviors would be beneficial.

Another limitation of this thesis exists within the design of the questionnaire. Particularly, the survey does not take into account the impact of personal income. Individuals with low salary might be unable to afford the luxurious trip being mentioned, which reduces the capability of the survey to reflect their purchase intentions. This drawback is more likely to occur among Vietnamese considering Vietnam as a developing country. As follows, paying more attention to social classes would be an improvement for future research to build on. It is also notable that R-square in the Linear Regression between envy and purchase intention is small (2.8%). Thus, other variables besides envy could be included to develop a more meaningful model in predicting purchase intentions. Nonetheless, rigorous evaluations of these variables are necessary to ensure the usability of the new equation.

Finally, this thesis and the study of Krasnova et al. (2015) find that respondents often deny subjective but acknowledge objective experiences of envy. A typical explication for such pattern is social desirability bias (Krasnova et al., 2015; Tandoc et al., 2015). However, without any scientific confirmation, the accuracy of this explanation is not guaranteed. As a result, qualitative or a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies would be useful in gaining a thorough understanding of this issue.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey on Consumer Behavior

I am Quan Nguyen, a student at Aalto University, School of Business, Mikkeli Campus in Finland. This is a survey for my graduation bachelor thesis. The participants of this survey are Vietnamese and Finnish consumers of all ages. My topic is about consumer purchase intention. All answers will be anonymous, and participation is voluntary. If there are any questions that are difficult, or you are unwilling to answer, it is possible to skip them. You now can move to the next page to answer the questions.

Please answer the following questions based on your level of agreement: *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important for me to respect decisions made by the group. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would rather say 'no' directly than risk being misunderstood. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My personal identity independent of others is very important to me. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following questions based on your level of agreement: *

Neither
agree

Strongly
disagree

Disagree

Somewhat
disagree

nor
disagree

Somewhat
agree

Agree

Strongly
agree

I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what others think about it. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I am not the type of person who compares often with others. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others have done. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people. *

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Please answer the following questions based on your level of agreement: *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what others think about it. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not the type of person who compares often with others. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others have done. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Answer the following questions based on your level of agreement: *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I envy others, I focus on how I can become equally successful in the future. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I notice that another person is better than me, I try to improve myself. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Envyng others motivate me to accomplish my goals. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I strive to reach other people's superior achievement. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If someone has superior qualities, achievements or possessions, I try to attain them for myself. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Imagine about an online friend who is of the same gender and of similar age. You both have mutual interests including your sports, travel, music and some other preferences. *

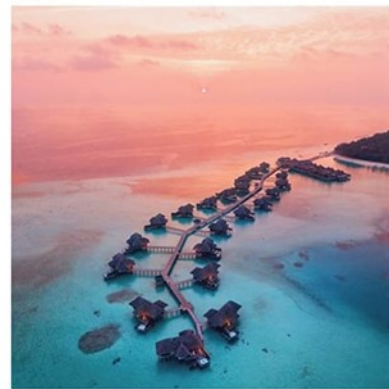
Can you think of a friend like that?

☐ Yes

☐ No

(If the answer is ‘Yes’) Please read the story below and pay attention to the picture under it

One day, when you were scrolling down your social media, you saw X just posted a picture about a luxurious trip (living in a high-class hotel and eating expensive food) to a city that you have always wanted to visit. X wrote a caption along with the pictures sharing how beautiful the place is and the amazing 5-star service received throughout the stay to show the luxurious nature of their travel. X said that they were extremely happy. When you asked X how he or she obtained the trip, X shared that they worked really hard (doing multiple jobs) over the past few months to save for this trip.



What do you think X did to purchase this trip? *

- ☐ Got it as a gift from his or her parents
- ☐ Worked really hard (doing multiple jobs) over the past few months.
- ☐ Won a lottery

(If the answer is ‘No’) Do you have a friend similar to you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(If the answer is ‘Yes’: Continue with the case study)

(If the answer is ‘No’: Thank you for your participation.)

Answer the following question based on your level of agreement: *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Do you think X's travel is luxurious? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Would you like to ask which full-time or part-time job he or she is doing? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Would you like to know where X purchased the trip? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Answer the following question based on your level of agreement: *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Do you think X deserves the trip? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In your opinion, which emotions do most people experience when they see their online friends post about this on social media websites? *

Answer the following question based on your level of agreement: *

	Not at all	Very probably not	Probably not	Neutral	Probably yes	Very probably yes	Definitely
Would you be envious of X? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Answer the following questions based on your level of certainty: *

	Not at all	Very probably not	Probably not	Maybe	Probably yes	Very probably yes	Definitely
Would you like to have this trip? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Would you be a little worried that the other person has this wonderful trip and you do not? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Would you give it to someone else to have the trip? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Answer the following questions based on your opinion:*

	None						A lot
How much effort would you be willing to spend to acquire it? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How much effort do you think others will be willing to spend to acquire it? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If working hard would also allow you to purchase the same trip, answer the following questions based on your agreement level: *

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to work hard to afford the same trip. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people will also be motivated to obtain the trip. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am plotting my course of action on how I will obtain a trip similar to this. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will focus my energies on purchasing a similar type of trip*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Why would you purchase the trip? Answer the following questions based on your agreement level:*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to be as successful as X. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to be like X. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not want to lose my status. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A trip similar to X might improve my status. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is shameful not following what my friends do. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The trip is what most people can afford nowadays, and X helped me realize that. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can share the experience on social media and have people envy me. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

•
What is your age? Please answer this question in number (years)

What is your gender? •

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

What is your marital status? •

- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated

What is your nationality? •

- ☐ Finnish
- ☐ Vietnamese

Appendix 2: Significance values of follow up H1 testing

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
<i>I want to work hard to afford the same trip.</i>	Equal variances assumed	9.99	0.00	4.70	204.00	0.00	1.01	0.22	0.59	1.44
	Equal variances not assumed			4.26	79.20	0.00	1.01	0.24	0.54	1.49
<i>Other people will also be motivated to obtain the trip.</i>	Equal variances assumed	0.22	0.64	3.21	204.00	0.00	0.52	0.16	0.20	0.85
	Equal variances not assumed			3.21	93.64	0.00	0.52	0.16	0.20	0.85
<i>I am plotting my course of action on how I will obtain a trip similar to this.</i>	Equal variances assumed	3.19	0.08	5.80	204.00	0.00	1.37	0.24	0.91	1.84
	Equal variances not assumed			5.37	81.84	0.00	1.37	0.26	0.87	1.88
<i>I will focus my energies on purchasing a similar type of trip.</i>	Equal variances assumed	2.51	0.11	5.65	204.00	0.00	1.37	0.24	0.89	1.85
	Equal variances not assumed			5.27	83.00	0.00	1.37	0.26	0.85	1.89

Appendix 3: Significance values of assumptions testing

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
COLLECTIVISM	Equal variances assumed	5.87	0.02	-2.61	204.00	0.01	-0.41	0.16	-0.72	-0.10
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.60	196.09	0.01	-0.41	0.16	-0.72	-0.10
INDIVIDUALISM	Equal variances assumed	0.01	0.94	-1.07	204.00	0.29	-0.14	0.13	-0.40	0.12
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.07	203.33	0.29	-0.14	0.13	-0.40	0.12
SOCIAL_COMPARISON	Equal variances assumed	3.97	0.05	-3.43	204.00	0.96	0.006	0.1154	-0.222	0.233
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.45	185.92	0.96	0.006	0.1148	-0.221	0.232